

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD) released the following statement today in celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month:

“It is during this month that we commemorate the significant contributions that the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community has made to our country.

“There are more than 12 million Asian American and Pacific Islanders in the United States, including about 275,000 in my home state of Maryland. Asian Pacific Americans also have the most diverse background of any minority population, tracing their roots to almost fifty different countries and ethnic groups.

“Today, Asian Pacific Americans play an important role in every aspect of American life – as authors and artists, as business leaders, as political leaders, as military leaders, as scientists and innovators, as athletes, and in virtually every other aspect of American society.

“In addition to recognizing the important role that Asian Pacific Americans play in our country, this month’s celebration is also a time to remember significant historical contributions that Asian Pacific Americans have made in our nation’s history. From the building of our transcontinental railroads to fighting on behalf of our nation, Asian Pacific Americans have contributed greatly to the American tapestry.

“This year’s theme for Asian Pacific American Heritage Month is “Liberty and Freedom for All.” This spirit was embodied in Representative Robert Matsui, who passed away in December, and for whom I wish to pay tribute. The House of Representatives and the country as a whole suffered a great loss with the passing of Bob Matsui, a dedicated leader who served with distinction for 13 terms in the House and was chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

“During his career, Bob Matsui was an active member of the Asian Pacific American community, working to achieve redress for Japanese Americans who were placed in internment camps after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Congressman Matsui himself was placed in the Tule Lake internment camp along with his family in 1942. He was later instrumental in securing the passage of the Japanese-American Redress Act as well as in ensuring a monument to Japanese-American patriotism during World War II.

“Representative Matsui’s experience demonstrates the determination and perseverance that characterized Asian Pacific Americans during their time here in the United States, oftentimes overcoming discrimination, language and cultural barriers.

“I am pleased Americans have so much to benefit as a result of our diverse society. We continue to learn from each other and share each other’s traditions, history, and culture.

“That is why it gives me great pleasure to recognize the significant advances and contributions made by the Asian Pacific American Community to our country during Asian Pacific Heritage month.”

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